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**October 14, 2019**

**NEWS RELEASE**

## **Department Celebrates National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day**

### **HIV Prevention Program offers free testing, education**

**EL PASO, TEXAS** – The City of El Paso Department of Public Health's HIV Prevention program will join agencies and organizations across the country in celebrating National LatinX AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD) as a way to raise awareness about issues that Latino/Latina/Latinx individuals face at all stages of the HIV epidemic.

In 2017 almost 4,400 cases of HIV were newly diagnosed in Texas with 133 of them diagnosed in El Paso. "We have seen about a 30 percent increase in cases in El Paso, and while we are glad that more people are being tested, we are continuing our efforts to help end this epidemic," said Irene Ovalle, HIV Prevention Program Manager.

Organizers also say it is important to draw attention to the many barriers and inequalities Latinos face that can lead to HIV infection. Some factors include: stigma, low access to healthcare, language barriers in the healthcare system, lack of health insurance and/or appropriate documents, and hesitation to talk about sexual health with medical professionals, family or friends.

"Recent trends in immigration policies have caused many Latinx individuals to put off needed care or seek out testing services because of their immigration status. Many people do not realize that HIV testing services are offered regardless of immigration status or income," Ovalle said. "Putting off testing can lead to a late diagnosis and negative health outcomes."

Free, confidential, and rapid HIV Testing will take place both **Tuesday, October 15**, and with extended hours on **Wednesday October 16** at the HIV Prevention Program located at **701 Montana Ave, El Paso, Texas 79902**. Hours on **Tuesday** will be from **8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** and from **1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** Extended hours on **Wednesday** will be from **8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** and from **1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

The theme for this year's National Latinx HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is "Living with HIV or not...we're fighting this together" with a focus on the tools available to address HIV in our communities and the elimination of HIV-related stigma.

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